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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 003073

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE PLEASE PASS TO AIT/W AND EAP/RSP/TC

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [AMGT](#) [SENV](#) [ECON](#) [KSCA](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#) [ESTH](#)

SUBJECT: TYPHOON HAITANG SLAMS TAIWAN

REF: TAIPEI 02641

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

11. (U) Summary. Typhoon Haitang, the largest typhoon to hit Taiwan in five years, brought strong winds and torrential rains to Taiwan July 17-19. No part of Taiwan escaped unscathed with eastern and southern Taiwan suffering the greatest damage. At least 8 people died, 31 have been injured and 1 is missing. However, numbers are expected to rise as the extent of damage in Eastern and Southern Taiwan is assessed after the rains abate. Due to the typhoon, all cities throughout Taiwan were closed for work and classes for at least one day. All rail and most air service were also halted on the 18th. The storm left over 1.5 million households without power and about 130,000 households without water for at least some period of time. Agricultural losses compounded those incurred during spring floods in southern Taiwan adding at least another NTD 2.6 billion (USD 81.3 million). The flooding left in the storm's wake renewed the Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) call for a special Legislative Yuan (LY) session to pass a bill for an eight-year NTD 80 billion (USD 2.5 billion) flood-control project (reftel). Opposition parties claim the proposal is designed to buy votes rather than stop floods. End Summary.

#### Heavy Rain and Landslides

12. (U) Typhoon Haitang, the largest typhoon to hit Taiwan in five years, brought strong winds and torrential rains to Taiwan July 17-19. In its wake at least 8 people died, 31 have been injured and 1 is missing. However, numbers are expected to rise as the extent of damage in Eastern and Southern Taiwan is assessed after the rains down south abate. Warnings of landslides, mudslides and flash floods were issued for areas along 298 streams in Hualien, Ilan, Taipei, Taoyuan, Hsinchu and Taichung counties. Several of the worst hit areas saw well over 1 meter of rainfall.

13. (U) Particularly hard hit were eastern and southern Taiwan. These areas saw extensive damage to roads and bridges, destroyed several homes and stranded residents and travelers in Kenting and Green Island. Kaohsiung Harbor has experienced serious impact, with a stranded freighter outside the port and several containers washed overboard inside the port. Details of damage to these areas Taiwan will be reported in septel.

14. (U) Heavy rains and winds also severely disrupted air and ground transportation, with all rail service and most flights cancelled on July 18. The storm left over 1.5 million households without power and 130,000 households without water for at least some period of time. By noon on July 20, while power was restored to most households, 20,346 remained in the dark.

15. (U) The government evacuated many residents (some by force) in areas at highest risk for mudslides and stepped up campaigns to discourage people from engaging in high risk activities such as mountain hiking and staying near the ocean. These measures have been credited with reducing the loss of life and damage.

#### Agricultural and Economic Impact

16. (U) The Council of Agriculture estimates agricultural losses at approximately NTD 2.6 billion (USD 81.3 million), including NTD 2.34 billion (USD 73.1 million) in crops, NTD 7.43 million (USD 232,000) in livestock, NTD 1.32 million (USD 41,250) in fisheries and NTD 57 million (USD 1.8 million) in forestry. Livestock losses included 62 pigs, 18,000 chickens and 29,000 ducks. Losses in farms and agricultural facilities and livestock facilities were estimated at NTD 206 million (USD 6.4 million). Approximately 34,970 hectares of agricultural land was damaged. Agricultural officials say those figures will be revised upwards as the rains are expected to continue in the

south for at least another day.

17. (U) In an effort to ameliorate the impact on prices, the Council of Agriculture has released some 500 tons of frozen vegetables and fruits into the market. Some vegetables prices have increased by as much as 50 percent while others are experiencing price hikes in the 5-10 percent range.

#### Flood Controls Put to Test

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18. (U) Typhoon Haitang put a new flood control system along the Keelung River to test. The Yuanshantze water works was designed to release water to the sea through a system of tunnels whenever the water level in the river exceeds 63 meters. By all accounts, the system worked as planned and the cities of Wudu and Sijhih were spared significant flooding as a result.

#### Politics

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19. (SBU) In response to the new bout of flooding caused by the typhoon, the DPP has once again called for the Legislative Yuan (LY) to hold a special session to pass a bill for an eight-year NTD 80 billion (USD 2.5 billion) flood-control project (reftel). Opposition parties claim that it is not necessary to rush to hold an emergency summer special LY session for the type of long-term planning required for flood control and prevention. In the words of one Taiwan Solidarity Union Legislator, "The bill does not actually propose any specific plan. It simply provides monies to local DPP strongholds and is designed to buy votes rather than to prevent flooding." This view was echoed in an Economic Daily editorial.

Paal